

Long Beach ups damage estimate

By Candy Hatcher
Staff Writer

LONG BEACH — Town officials, after surveying storm damage inside beach cottages and buildings, have raised their initial \$4.5 million damage estimate to "two to three times that."

Mayor Ben Thomas said the \$4.5 million figure estimated after Hurricane Diana was a preliminary figure from "only looking from the outside." Many buildings have serious interior water damage even though they appear unscathed from the outside, he said.

Some town-owned buildings were destroyed by the storm and the Long Beach Board of Commissioners agreed Wednesday night to allocate \$100,000 to begin repairs on Town Hall and public works and public safety buildings.

Long Beach's insurance company will reimburse the town for the repairs, Town Manager Steve Foster

said, but the \$100,000 figure is just a start. Damage to the public works building alone is estimated at \$80,000, he said.

If Brunswick County is declared a disaster area by President Reagan, federal funds will help pay repair bills. Foster said Wednesday night that local officials are worried that officials will say Long Beach does not qualify for the funds. On Thursday, Foster said the decision was still pending.

Federal Emergency Management Administration appraisers have surveyed property in Long Beach, Foster said, and "There's quite a bit of question in their minds" about the town qualifying for federal disaster funds. Foster, however, told the commissioners, "There's a lot more damage in people's houses than they first realized."

Foster reported that four houses and one business had been destroyed by the hurricane, 181

houses suffered major damage and 590 had minor damage. Three multi-family residences and six businesses had major damage and three businesses had minor damage.

In related business, the commissioners unanimously agreed to pay overtime to town employees who worked extra hours during the storm, and they approved resolutions of appreciation for emergency workers and state agencies that helped during and after the hurricane.

Long Beach resident Eileen Kelagher, who in the past has frequently criticized town officials, praised the police, fire department and rescue squad "for the tremendous job they did."

The mayor agreed. He said he was thankful that, "confronted with a difficult situation, regardless of our differences, we could all pull together and help each other in a time of crisis."